

as one of the 30 inspiring Latinas and Latinos who have shaped the United States in “Nuestra América,” published by the Smithsonian Institution. She is the honoree of the 35th Hispanic Heritage Foundation—2022 STEM Award.

By pioneering many firsts during her career, Lt. Col. Custodio has shattered stereotypes and served as a powerful role model for those aspiring to become a pilot. As a pioneer who overcame tremendous challenges to excel in a male-dominated profession, she gained essential life insights and perspectives that she shares with everyone, especially women working to achieve their dreams.

Lt. Col. Custodio lives in San Antonio, Texas, with her husband of 48 years, Edwin, and they have two children, Marcia and Edwin II, and one grandson, Jedi.

Madam Speaker—I am proud to recognize a member of the San Antonio community who is a shining example of our country's strength in diversity. Lt. Col. Custodio is an inspiration to the Latino community and continues to display an immense commitment to public service. I'm grateful that her knowledge and experience have helped usher in the next generation of military leaders. I wish her and her family the best.

HONORING MICHAEL “MIKABEN”  
BENJAMIN

HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Madam Speaker, as a congressional representative of the Haitian community in South Florida, I rise to honor the life and legacy of Haitian music icon Michael “Mikaben” Benjamin.

Born in 1981 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti to legendary Haitian singer Lionel and famed doctor Roseline Benjamin, Michael was just 16 years old when he was introduced to the Haitian music scene with his performance of “Nwèl Tristès” alongside his sister Melodie Benjamin. He released his first album *Vwayaj* that following year, which featured one of his most popular hits, “Ou Pati.” The success of “Ou Pati” would pave his musical journey as a singer, composer, and producer. He would go on to release more hits such as “Ayiti Se,” “Ti Pam Nan,” “Fe Lapli,” and “Marry Me.” He would also sing and produced hits such as “Fanm Sa Move” and “Baby I Missed You” for Carimi and hits for other global music acts including Kai, Enposib, Harmonik, Kreyol La, T-Vice, Karizma, Alan Cave, Ruthshelle Guillaume, Leila Chicot, J-Perry, and Lionel Benjamin, his father. Mikaben's music transcended genres and cultures. Along with his musical accomplishments, Mikaben will be remembered for being a loving son, husband, father, patriot, mentor, and philanthropist.

He empowered many Haitian children through his Ti Souf Foundation. The image of him draped in the Haitian flag while performing with Carimi, moments before his passing, is indelibly etched in the minds and hearts of millions of Haitians and others around the world.

On October 15, 2022, Mikaben suddenly collapsed while walking off stage after performing his hit song “Ou Pati.” He was later pronounced dead despite medical intervention.

He was performing in front of a sold-out audience at a reunion concert for Carimi, a famed Haitian band, that was held at Eastern Paris? Accor Arena. Mikaben is survived by his pregnant wife Vanessa Fanfan, his two children, and his parents, Lionel and Roseline Benjamin. He is also survived by his two siblings and countless fans from around the world.

Understandably, the Haitian community has been devastated by the sudden passing of Mikaben. The community has galvanized to honor him and support his family. Madam Speaker and everyone in this nation, please join me in honoring the life and legacy of legendary musician Michael “Mikaben” Benjamin.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JUDGE  
FRANCES MUNOZ

HON. J. LUIS CORREA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Mr. CORREA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Frances Munoz, our nation's first Latina judge. Judge Frances Munoz died on October 17, 2022, of natural causes. She was 92 years old.

Judge Frances Munoz has the distinction of being the first Latina female appointed or elected to the bench in California and the first Latina female appointed or elected as a trial court jurist in the United States. She served for 23 years in the Orange County Municipal and Superior Courts and an additional 15 years as an Assigned Judge.

From humble beginnings, Frances was born at the height of the depression on September 18, 1930, the fifth of eleven children, in the mining town of Miami, Arizona. The family moved to Puritan, Colorado, and her father continued to work in the coal mines until the mines “played out.”

In 1941, the family moved to Corona, California, and joined the thousands of others working in farm labor. Frances and her siblings joined their parents in the fields during the summers picking tomatoes, grapes, and other crops in the Fresno area, sometimes sleeping outdoors.

Judge Munoz inspired her younger siblings to study and pursue higher education. After high school, she went to work selling furniture and she paid for the college expenses of her siblings.

Undaunted, Judge Munoz pursued her own education by attending night classes at Los Angeles City College, UCLA and law school while managing Atlas Furniture stores during the day. In 1972, Judge Munoz received her law degree from Southwestern University School of Law where she was a member of the Law Review.

She moved to Orange County, where her brother Greg, a graduate from USC law school, had opened a practice. (Greg later became an Orange County Superior Court judge and served alongside Frances on the bench.)

In 1972, Frances joined the office of the Orange County Public Defender, where she was the first Latina and the second woman to be hired in that office.

In 1974, she and several Latino attorneys established the Orange County Mexican-American Lawyers Club, which was later renamed the Hispanic Bar Association of Or-

ange County. One of their goals was to ensure that more Latinos, who were qualified and experienced, be appointed or elected to the bench. As a result of the efforts, today there are 19 Latino judges out of 124 Superior Court Judges on the Orange County bench and two Latino justices out of eight Appellate Court justices in Orange County.

On January 25, 1978, Governor Jerry Brown's office telephoned Frances Munoz to advise her that she had been appointed as a Judge in the Harbor Municipal Court in Orange County. She was not at her desk. She was in court representing a defendant in a felony jury trial.

As a Deputy Public Defender, she was known as a zealous advocate. But she was also noted for being civil with opposing counsel and respectful of the court. She was also acknowledged for creating and meticulously cataloging 3x5 cards in a small box. On each card she wrote out the facts and holding of the appellate court in key cases involving “furtive gestures,” “search of trunk,” and other criminal law issues. She would quickly retrieve a key citation during a motion or trial.

Within months of her appointment, she was opposed by a male Deputy District Attorney. Several Harbor Municipal Court judges, and multitudes of Orange County attorneys, court staff, bailiffs, police officers, and clergy rallied around her to host fundraisers and to support her in the retention election. Her ten brothers and sisters and their children and parishioners from her church, St. Joachim Catholic Church in Costa Mesa, canvassed neighborhoods to get out the vote. In that 1980 election, Judge Frances Munoz was retained with the largest plurality of votes of any challenged judge in the state. Four other judges in Orange County lost their seats that year. She was never challenged again.

In 1980 and 1990 she was elected the Supervising Judge of the Harbor Municipal Court and in 1990 was also recognized as the Outstanding Judge of the Year by the Orange County Women Lawyers Association. In 1976, she co-founded the Orange County Hispanic Education Endowment Fund which awards college scholarships to Latino scholars.

In 2001, Judge Munoz retired from the bench, but continued her public service as an assigned judge until 2016. She also served on the board of directors of THINK—Teaching, Helping, Instructing Kids and boards of other non-profit organizations.

Every Thursday she would tutor students at Santa Ana's Madison Elementary school. She was also a keen real estate investor who purchased several commercial and residential properties. She always accommodated nieces and nephews in her spacious Corona Del Mar home while they studied and earned their bachelors, masters or medical degrees at the University of California, Irvine.

Judge Munoz is survived by four sisters, Margaret Munoz, Vera Munoz-Harrison, Rosie Schirling, and Angie Quintana and 25 nieces and nephews and 45 great nieces and nephews.

Please join me in celebrating the long, accomplished life of Judge Frances Munoz. She will be remembered for her perseverance in the face of adversity, excellence as a law student, attorney and judge, for her lifetime dedication to public service and children's education, and for her compassionate and gracious spirit.